



## Inspiration Point



At age 87, after he had created such masterpieces as the Sistine Chapel, the Pieta, and St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, the great artist **Michelangelo** was asked if he believed himself to be a Master of his trade.

He was quoted as saying, "Ancoro imparo."

**"I am still learning."**

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A compass does not dictate or control the course of a journey, but is a tool that provides guidance and marks important points by which the navigator gains the perspective needed to reach his/her destination successfully.

# The New Vision of Professional Development

Bv: Wendi Webster O'Dell, Ed.D. . PTSB Officer and Compass Editor

After the first year of the required professional development for teachers initiative, members of the Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB) have been pleased to find a shift in the level of communication and understanding about the dramatic impact that good professional development (PD) can have on teachers' professional success, school improvement, and student achievement. Throughout the state, conversations have shifted from counting hours toward the reflective examination of how PD can support improved professional practice and enhance student learning. Teachers are looking to their PD experiences for quality opportunities for professional growth. It is the sincere goal of every member of the PTSB to strengthen the quality of the PD opportunities available to all NJ teachers and to provide guidance toward becoming an "educated consumer" of your own PD.

We recognize that simply requiring professional development is different from improving it. Therefore, in this second edition of *The Compass*, we offer some highlights and guidance to improve the quality of decision-making regarding PD choices for NJ teachers. With a clearer understanding of the features of "good" PD, participants can select activities that more directly contribute to improved student learning.

We hope that you will use all of the tools available to you. Put every effort into learning how to identify your own needs and look for PD experiences that are relevant to the learning community in which you work. Apply the PD standards and look at the potential in your own practice. Focus upon the quality, not the quantity, of your PD experiences and you will find success!

Every educator shares in the responsibility for his or her own professional development and we look forward to helping you reach your goals.



Wendi

## A Self-Directed Change Model for Selecting PD

## Vision Point

As you plan for your own professional development, you will want to review both the PD Standards and the Core Curriculum Content Standards before you make your selections. In order to select experiences that will be the most effective for your unique needs and interests, begin by asking yourself a few questions about your own view of effective teaching practices.

Reflect on your own goals in conjunction with district improvement goals and objectives, student achievement data, and other sources of information (see Talking Points) as the basis for selecting PD experiences that will help you to implement meaningful changes in your classroom. The following questions are just a few suggestions to get you started on a regular self-reflective process.

**Subject matter knowledge:** Am I as knowledgeable as I should be in the subject areas that I teach? Am I keeping current with advances and new knowledge in my specialty area(s)?

**Teachers as learners:** Am I continuing to learn? Is the climate of the school supportive of me as a learner? Am I contributing to my colleagues' learning?

**Instructional strategies:** Are the instructional strategies that I use based on sound research? Are they effective? What other strategies might I employ to enhance student learning?

**Classroom assessment:** Am I using assessment to inform instruction or merely to record grades? Do I use a variety of assessment strategies?

**Time management:** Am I using class time and planning time efficiently? Are faculty and department meetings used to review student work and/or share best practices?

**Beliefs about good teaching:** Is there a mission statement that reflects the beliefs of teachers at my school? Are teachers' stated beliefs about teaching consistent with actual practice? Are school policies supportive of the stated beliefs of the faculty?

**Relationships with students:** How do students feel about themselves and about learning? How do I impact these feelings? How can I enhance students' self-image as learners?

**Planning for instruction:** Am I using available resources to plan? Am I including information about learning styles, multiple intelligences, and other relevant student attributes as I plan?

Research has revealed that the best PD experiences inspire participants with the desire to learn and to teach themselves more about a topic. Self-initiated learning, once begun, develops its own momentum.

*Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development*, SERVE, the Regional Educational Laboratory of the Southeast

## Talking Points

Efforts to consider your own teaching practice should involve multiple measures to create a complete and accurate picture.

Try collecting data on your own performance by:

- Drawing comparisons with current best practice models and the work of other expert teachers.
  - Engaging in peer observation and reflection sessions.
  - Inviting feedback from colleagues and students.
  - Reviewing student achievement data.
  - Chronicling your growth in a portfolio.
- ...Discuss with your colleagues!



## FAQ's



## Point of Information

Q. What is the difference between developing and adapting curriculum, which counts hour for hour, and serving on a curriculum committee which only counts for ten hours per year?

A. Developing or modifying curriculum involves a lengthy and detailed process of research and examination of the Core Curriculum Content Standards, correlation of the district curriculum with those standards, and writing/revising the curriculum to meet those standards. It may also include curriculum mapping which involves analysis and coordination with other departments or teachers toward the goal of enhancing student learning. Curriculum writing involves decision-making by educators to determine the content, scope and sequence of the units of instruction. The work involved in that process counts hour for hour because it represents the development of a sustained and in-depth plan to construct the body of knowledge in a given course, subject or discipline, where all students must demonstrate proficiency. Members of a curriculum committee give input into issues and provide feedback on general topics or the logistics of the work, but they are not involved in writing or developing a plan of action. Serving on a curriculum committee does not require the same degree of preparation or participation as actually researching and writing or revising a curriculum. Therefore, curriculum committee meetings, like other committee meetings, count as committee work, and curriculum writing is an hour-for-hour PD activity.

Q. If my district pays me for service on a committee or pays a stipend for a special project, can I still get credit for professional development?

A. Payment does not preclude earning professional development hours and is a matter for local negotiations. If the additional work incorporates the acquisition of new knowledge and skills related to the teacher's primary employment, is consistent with the PD Standards and Frameworks, and is listed in the teacher's Professional Improvement Plan (PIP), then the experience should be credited as a professional development activity, regardless of payment status.

Q. Can a local administrator independently interpret the Frameworks (What Counts?) document?

A. Along with the PD Standards, the Professional Development Framework [What Counts?] lists the range of professional development activities the Commissioner of Education has approved for professional development credit across the state. If professional development activities meet the criteria in N.J.A.C. 6:11-13, including the PD Standards and Frameworks, and are identified in the teacher's PIP, then the local administrator and teacher must agree upon the appropriate credit for those experiences. Specific questions surrounding an independent study experience or other unique project may be referred to the DOE at 609-777-4810.

## Point of Reference



During the year 2000-2001, the most comprehensive resource and the first place to start is the NJ Professional Development for Teachers Web site located at: <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/index.html>

On the site, you will find the regulations, standards, timelines and various implementation procedures; the provider directory and other PD

opportunities in NJ; research and other resources to help you both understand and articulate details of the initiative; and some information on the PTSB, its mission, and operation.

Another excellent resource is the book titled: *Achieving Your Vision of Professional Development* by David Collins. Dr. Collins was a featured speaker at the 2001 NJEA Convention.

Information on this and other books is available at our Web bibliography. CHECK IT OUT!



## What's The Point ?

What Is "Good" Professional Development (PD)?

How do you know what to look for when selecting a PD experience?

Today, we know that meaningful PD not only includes high-quality training programs with intensive follow-up and support, but also other growth-promoting processes such as study groups, action research, and peer coaching, to name a few.

When selecting a PD experience to add to the goals listed in your PIP, there is no need for a disconnect between individual PD goals and the district's PD goals. It is helpful to view individual needs and district goals in a holistic way.

The PTSB has collected evidence from a variety of credible research sources and offer these highlights to you as a guide.

### Look for these features when you search and plan for meaningful professional development:

\*Research indicates that four main elements of PD are critical for impacting student learning: content that is aligned with high standards, active learning opportunities, sustained activities (such as those in year-long reform efforts), and relevant, coherent issues that are integrated into the daily life of the school.

\*Professional development should, by its very nature, encourage professional discussions, reflection, and collaboration, and remain focused upon desired results. Look for these opportunities to be built into a provider's offering.

\*Traditional workshop experiences are most effective for originating new learning. In order to be fully effective, workshops must be followed by many opportunities for experimentation, collaboration, informal self-evaluation and accurate feedback - all in a supportive school climate of professional encouragement.

\*The content of a good PD experience should allow for individualization and adaptation and should reflect an adult learning style that inspires respect, trust and sincere interest.

\*When provided with the opportunity to select high-quality PD that will enrich their own practice, NJ teachers are becoming "educated consumers" of their own professional development!